

# AF Admits

## Drugging 13 Viet Refugees

Washington

The Air Force admitted yesterday that it drugged 13 Vietnamese refugees and put them on the last plane from Thailand to Guam as they demanded to be returned to Vietnam.

The Air Force issued a statement after Chairman Joshua Eilberg (Dem-Pa.) of the House immigration subcommittee said he had talked to 12 of the refugees and been told they had been drugged, beaten and taken to Guam against their will.

The Vietnamese had been flown from Vietnam to Thailand, and Thai officials adamantly refused to let them stay, so a decision was made by U.S. and Thai officials "to sedate the Vietnamese and take them to Guam," the Air Force said.

The 13 Vietnamese said that when they boarded the plane in Vietnam, they had been told it was flying to the delta region, not out of the country, the Air Force said.

The Air Force did not confirm the reports of beatings in Thailand.

"Near hysteria, they (refugees) demanded to be returned to Vietnam and threatened suicide if

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they were not returned immediately," the Air Force said.

"Hours of discussion failed to persuade them that there were no means to take them back," the Air Force said. "The Thai officials were adamant that they leave Thailand immediately."

The Air Force said the Vietnamese were sedated with medicines regularly given in evacuation situations "for the patients' comfort or where because of mental or emotional disturbance they may pose a threat to themselves or others."

An Air Force nurse accompanied the 13 Vietnamese on the flight and "no ill effects were noted," the Air Force said.

The decision to sedate the Vietnamese and take them to Guam with other refugees, the Air Force said, was made with the hope that they could be repatriated expeditiously.

Eilberg said the 13 Vietnamese were among 65 people who had fled to Thailand at the time of the fall of Saigon but changed their minds and asked to return to Vietnam.

"After being threatened by Air Force officers, 52 of the Vietnamese agreed to go to Guam. The 13 who did not were threatened first with jail and then death if they did not go to Guam," Eilberg's announcement said.

Eilberg said he was told during the interviews "that the 13 were then beaten and then each person was carried by four Americans into a room where they were given two injections in their arms and two in their legs."

Associated Press